

# CHILD FATALITY REVIEW TEAM ESTABLISHMENT PROTOCOL



**TEXAS**  
Health and Human  
Services

Texas Department of State  
Health Services

## Establishing a Local Child Fatality Review Team

Thank you for your interest in establishing a local Child Fatality Review Team (CFRT).

Child fatality review is a prevention-focused process to understand how and why children die and to help communities have a better understanding of underlying child fatality risk factors.

A local CFRT consists of multi-disciplinary team members who meet to review individual child deaths. Once a local CFRT is established, team members may review deaths in one county or may review deaths in a region consisting of more than one county.

See the [CFRT Operations Protocol](#) for more information.

The following steps are suggested to establish a local CFRT:

### 1. Identify Team Organizer(s)

Team organizer(s) may volunteer or be selected by their organization to coordinate a local CFRT. Team organizer(s) can be from any profession and must be willing to dedicate the time needed to establish a local CFRT.

### 2. Contact the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) State Injury Prevention Coordinator

The DSHS state injury prevention coordinator will assist team organizer(s) with establishing a local CFRT in their community.

Team organizer(s) should contact the state injury prevention coordinator at [cfrt@dshs.texas.gov](mailto:cfrt@dshs.texas.gov) to request:

- Information about establishing a local CFRT.
- County or region-specific mortality data during a specified time period to assist with planning future child fatality review meetings.

Once a local CFRT is established, the state injury prevention coordinator will provide team training and death certificate reports containing case information.

### **3. Contact an Established Local CFRT**

Team organizer(s) may contact the presiding officer of an established local CFRT with at least one year of experience in conducting child fatality reviews for permission to attend a meeting. Observing an established local CFRT can provide operational insight on how to conduct a child fatality review meeting.

Team organizer(s) may contact the DSHS state injury prevention coordinator for assistance if they do not know of an established local CFRT.

### **4. Develop and Contact a List of Local CFRT Prospective Team Members**

Using the list of suggested local CFRT members below, team organizer(s) should develop a list of prospective team members and contact prospective team members to discuss establishing a local CFRT.

Prospective team members must have knowledge and experience related to child fatalities in the community and should be in a leadership position with the authority to implement necessary changes and obligate their organization in cooperative projects and protocols.

A local CFRT must reflect the diversity of the county's population and may include the following members:

- a criminal prosecutor involved in prosecuting crimes against children;
- a sheriff;
- a justice of the peace;
- a medical examiner;
- a police chief;
- a pediatrician experienced in diagnosing and treating child abuse and neglect;
- a child educator;
- a child mental health provider;
- a public health professional;
- a child protective services specialist;
- a sudden infant death syndrome family service provider;
- a neonatologist;
- a child advocate;

- a chief juvenile probation officer; and
- a child abuse prevention specialist.

Local CFRTs that review deaths in a region consisting of more than one county should have areas of jurisdiction or professional responsibilities in common. Each county covered by a local CFRT should have a member representative. A regional director or other professional whose jurisdiction or responsibilities include the county would fulfill this requirement.

## 5. Conduct a Stakeholder Meeting

Team organizer(s) should invite prospective team members, the DSHS state injury prevention coordinator and, if possible, a team member from an established local CFRT to attend a stakeholder meeting.

The stakeholder meeting provides prospective team members an opportunity to discuss local CFRT operation and address all operational issues prior to beginning child fatality review meetings.

During the stakeholder meeting, prospective team members determine if their organization would like to participate on the local CFRT. Stakeholder meetings may be held virtually or in person.

### During a stakeholder meeting:

- The DSHS state injury prevention coordinator will review and discuss the CFRT authorizing statute, [Texas Family Code, Chapter 264, Subchapter F](#), and provide CFRT history, components of a case review meeting, and helpful tips for case review.
- Prospective team members will introduce themselves and provide information about their organization.
- Team organizer(s) will discuss CFRT member roles.
- Team organizer(s) will allow time for participation, question asking, and concerns. The DSHS state injury prevention coordinator or established CFRT member can be a resource for answers to these questions or concerns.
- Prospective team members will volunteer for membership.

- Team organizer(s) and team members will develop a list of additional prospective team members according to community resources and needs and develop a plan for enlisting participation, including a timeframe to complete contact.
- Team organizer(s) and team members will select CFRT leadership positions. See the Team Leadership section of the CFRT Operations Protocol for more information.
- Team organizer(s) and team members will set a time, date, and location for a second stakeholder meeting. If the local CFRT does not require a second stakeholder meeting, team leaders and team members will schedule the first child fatality review meeting.

Following the stakeholder meeting:

- Team organizer(s) should inform the DSHS state injury prevention coordinator of the names and contact information of the selected team leaders and the date of the first child fatality review meeting.
- Team leaders must have each team member sign a CFRT Member Agreement prior to participating in a child fatality review meeting. The purpose of the Member Agreement is to establish official working relationships and a commitment to CFRT confidentiality standards.
- Team leaders must keep the signed Member Agreement and submit a copy to the DSHS state injury prevention coordinator. See [Appendix A](#) for the Member Agreement.

## Appendix A

### Child Fatality Review Team Member Agreement

Local Child Fatality Review Teams (CFRTs) may use the attached template by clicking the paper clip icon or downloading it directly at: [dshs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/injury/CFRT/SCFRT\\_Member\\_Agreement\\_2023.pdf](https://dshs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/injury/CFRT/SCFRT_Member_Agreement_2023.pdf).



It is agreed that team members must sign the Child Fatality Review Team (CFRT) Member Agreement:

- When forming a new local CFRT.
- When joining a local CFRT.
- Prior to participating in a child fatality review meeting.

Team members may sign the Member Agreement physically or electronically. Team leaders must keep a copy of the Member Agreement and email a copy to the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) state injury prevention coordinator.

#### **Agreements:**

Members agree they will collaborate with a multi-disciplinary team to understand preventable child deaths and develop recommendations for intervention and prevention strategies.

Members agree the local CFRT objectives are to:

- Promote cooperation, communication, and coordination among organizations involved in responding to child fatalities.
- Assure the accurate reporting of child fatalities by age, location, cause, manner and circumstance.
- Support child death investigation and certification.
- Implement investigative guidelines and child fatality recommendations.
- Improve recognition of child fatalities from abuse and neglect, genetic diseases, inadequate medical care and public health dangers through analysis of patterns and trends.
- Enhance the general awareness and understanding of how and why children die.

- Identify system-based barriers to child health and safety that, when removed, will ultimately reduce preventable child fatality numbers.
- Initiate local prevention efforts to reduce preventable child fatality numbers as indicated by child fatality review findings.

Members agree the local CFRT membership may be comprised of, but not limited to, the following professionals:

- Criminal Prosecutor
- Sheriff
- Medical Examiner
- Justice of the Peace
- Police Chief
- Pediatrician
- Child Educator
- Child Mental Health Provider
- Public health professional
- A Child Protective Services Specialist
- A Sudden Infant Death Syndrome Service Provider
- Neonatologist
- Child advocate
- Juvenile probation officer
- Child Abuse Prevention Specialist

Members agree the child fatality review process requires review of individual child deaths and confidentiality is inherent in the involved reports, measures will be taken to protect confidentiality.

All local CFRT members will sign a confidentiality agreement prohibiting any unauthorized dissemination of information beyond the purpose of the CFRT. See the [Child Fatality Review Team Operations Protocol](#) for more information.

Members agree data will be submitted by the local CFRT to the National Fatality Review Case Reporting System where it will be maintained for the purpose of establishing state reports with standardized, non-identified, aggregate data from local CFRTs throughout Texas.

Name of Child Fatality Review Team: \_\_\_\_\_

The following member makes this agreement:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Member Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Member Organization

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



## Child Fatality Review Websites

### Texas Child Fatality Review

[dshs.texas.gov/injury-prevention/texas-child-fatality-review](https://dshs.texas.gov/injury-prevention/texas-child-fatality-review)

### State Child Fatality Review Team Committee

[dshs.texas.gov/injury-prevention/state-child-fatality-review-team-committee](https://dshs.texas.gov/injury-prevention/state-child-fatality-review-team-committee)

### National Center for Child Fatality Review and Prevention

[ncfrp.org/](https://ncfrp.org/)

### National Fatality Review Case Reporting System

[data.ncfrp.org/Account/Login](https://data.ncfrp.org/Account/Login)

## Contact Information

### Texas Child Fatality Review

Texas Department of State Health Services  
1100 West 49<sup>th</sup> Street  
Mail Code 1922  
Austin, Texas 78756

Phone: 512-776-7373  
Fax: 512-458-7658

[cfrt@dshs.texas.gov](mailto:cfrt@dshs.texas.gov)

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Establishment Protocol

***[dshs.texas.gov/injury-  
prevention/texas-child-fatality-  
review](https://dshs.texas.gov/injury-prevention/texas-child-fatality-review)***